



TOOLKIT "GET YOUTH ON BOARD!"

Youth Policies and Action Plans

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Relevance of structures for youth participation and youth promotion

Ambitious international conventions, charters and youth promotion strategies have been developed, which recognise the importance of the youth for future development. National youth policies and action plans are proven instruments for the adaptation of these strategies to local needs, and for the promotion of youth participation at national and community levels.

Background information

National youth policies and action plans are often affiliated with one another. Youth policies express the overall goals and visions of youth promotion along with the political commitment to institutionalise services which support the youth. Youth action plans normally relate to these policies and elaborate steps for the concrete implementation of youth promotion.

The objective of youth policies is to create an environment that promotes the full development of young people's personalities and their potential for social, economic and political integration. For this reason, the policies need to be planned for the longer term rather than for short-term interventions with no sustainable impact. Furthermore, youth policies should be participatory and based on a sector-wide approach that creates synergies between all relevant stakeholders instead of simply promoting a number of individual projects.

Youth policies should reflect an integrated, cross-sectoral and coherent approach. Since many departments and ministries are involved in youth issues, youth policies are interdisciplinary, inter-ministerial and multi-departmental.

Youth action plans constitute a binding framework to put into practice the promotion and participation of young people in society. The formulation of a youth action plan is based on local, national or international youth policies, and is intended to elaborate on concrete youth promotion services, activities or projects, defining their time frame, budget and institutional responsibilities.

Youth policies and action plans are usually compiled through the cooperation of several actors, including youth representatives. While the policies are normally formulated at the national level, youth action plans may be drafted for the local, regional, national or supra-national contexts. They provide a basis for enhanced cooperation and networking between state and non-state stakeholders. As such they can play an important role in building capacities within the institutions and organisations involved.

Youth action plans are particularly relevant for the implementation of youth promotion at meso and micro levels, where they can be decisive planning tools helping to adapt national or international requirements to the situation and needs of the respective community. Local action plans can focus on specific sectors that are of particular importance to the respective community. A broad process of participation can be initiated to involve all relevant NGOs, institutions and youth organisations, as well as other groups of young people – including marginalised youth – in the development, implementation and evaluation of the action plan. Although NGOs and youth organisations should also participate at the national level, at the communal level, the participation process can be organised more comprehensively and representatively.

As with youth policies, the objective of youth action plans is to establish integrated and cross-cutting youth promotion and empowerment that affects several sectors. The plans may differ in terms of the detail in which youth promotion projects are described and the extent to which youth representatives have been involved in their formulation. The success of a plan depends on its acceptance by the youth and the level of youth participation in its implementation.

Topics of youth policies and action plans

The topics of the youth policies and action plans are closely linked to each other. They can be oriented towards mainstreaming youth participation in a rather general way and across sectors, but they can also focus on certain issues. The ten fields of action identified by the international community in the World Programme of Action for Youth are:

- Education
- Employment
- Hunger and poverty
- Health
- Environment
- Drug abuse
- Juvenile delinquency
- Leisure-time activities
- Girls and young women
- Full and effective participation of youth in public life and decision making.

Many policies and action plans specify differentiated goals and services for different sub-groups of young people, for example girls, homeless youth, disabled youth, delinquent youth, youth of minorities, orphans and drop outs. This makes sense, because young people can not be regarded as a consistent target group with similar needs and problems.

As the high percentage of youth unemployment is a burning issue for many governments, more than 40 countries have submitted national youth policies or action plans (NAP), as well as progress reports on youth employment to the United Nations General Assembly. The United Nations Secretariat, ILO and the Youth Employment Network (YEN) have published guidelines on drafting a national action plan for youth employment.

The governments of several developing countries have elaborated youth policies and action plans for their implementation. The actual impact of these policies and plans on improving the situation of young people, or of particularly vulnerable sub-groups, has not yet been assessed. Hence, a great challenge for the coming years will be to monitor the impacts of these youth action plans.

Relevance for development cooperation

Internationally, it is widely acknowledged that public policy should include the promotion and social integration of young people. The World Development Report 2007 points out that, “Public policy can do much in determining which way things go. As the youth undergo each transition (learning – working life – healthful lifestyle – forming a family – exercising citizenship), the development of their human capital is hampered, not only by poverty, but also by policy failures that affect their options, especially the failure to provide or finance adequate services when markets do not work.”¹

Since young people have been recognised as an important target group of development cooperation, many efforts have been made to support national governments in the development of ambitious and complex youth policies and youth promotion strategies. Unfortunately, these documents have often “disappeared into a drawer” or functioned as a smoke screen for ineffective youth promotion. Therefore, in recent years increasing attention has been paid to the development of youth action plans as binding frameworks and guidelines for the implementation of youth policies.

Already in 1996 the UN adopted the “World Programme of Action on Youth” and in 2006 released a guide to its implementation. This recommends “developing a national action plan based on the needs of youth and the available budget”.² At the 2002 UN Special Session on Children in New York, the nations of the world committed themselves to a series of goals to improve the situation of children and young people. They elaborated a Plan of Action called “A World Fit for Children”, which includes the development of national action plans and, where appropriate, regional plans by the end of 2003.

As part of its activities supporting good governance and of youth promotion, **German Development Cooperation** has supported several partner countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and south-eastern Europe in the elaboration of integrated youth policies and action plans. This occurred in the framework of decentralisation and capacity development programmes for both governmental institutions and NGOs in the partner countries.

² UN (2006): *Guide to the Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat (DESA).

Development of youth policies and action plans

Required contents

Youth policies formulate visions for the development of young people, they define youth age groups and sub-groups, and they set overall goals and indicators for youth promotion. The action plans should contribute to the structuring, systematisation, coordination and coherence of youth promotion and empowerment. The development of a national or local action plan should be based on the needs of the youth and the available budget.

Both the policy and the action plan should contain statements on:

- Policy context
- Target groups
- Objectives
- Priorities.

The action plan should contain statements on:

- Key achievements of previous action plans
- Development process of the action plan
- Concrete lines of action and activities
- Expected results and impacts
- Groups, organisations and institutions responsible for implementation
- Time schedule
- Resources
- Analysis of risks
- Indicators of success for the evaluation.

The 10-step-process

The elaboration of youth policies and action plans usually involves the following steps:

1. Identification of responsible authorities and relevant stakeholders

First of all, the responsible authorities (e.g. ministries or youth offices) and relevant stakeholders (e.g. youth organisations, NGOs, educational institutions or partners from the private sector) have to be identified and mobilised. At the same time, other institutions that might be affected by the youth action plan may want to contribute and should therefore be invited to participate (e.g. families, trade unions, religious bodies, women's associations or groups for the disabled). As the establishment of a youth policy and a budget for youth promotion normally involve a redistribution of resources, the affected ministries and institutions should be included in the planning process. Furthermore, it is important to build trust and knowledge among the different players and to establish an appropriate information and communication system right from the beginning.

Although it is government institutions that usually initiate the formulation of the policies and action plans, cooperation with other institutions and youth promotion stakeholders is crucial. Involvement in the formulation, implementation and evaluation processes often implies the empowerment and legitimisation of the cooperating partners, especially the youth organisations. However, it also entails a partial shift of responsibility and power from the government to civil society.

2. Securing youth participation for the whole process

Youth and youth organisations should participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of youth policies and action plans. There are various approaches and methods for youth participation, for example youth hearings, interviews and the training of youth as professional interviewers (see Fact Sheet 1). A youth council or youth task force of elected youth representatives should be established to represent the interests of young people in the regular meetings of the steering committee. Care should be taken also to involve young people who are not organised or those from marginalised groups (e.g. through out-reach youth work).

3. Establishment of a steering committee

The committee should be composed of representatives of all relevant stakeholders. It should be responsible for the organisation of the whole process, from the development of the policy and action plan, to their implementation and evaluation. The selected representatives should coordinate their activities and contributions with the social groups they are standing for.

4. Analysis of the situation and of existing youth promotion measures

This analysis can be carried out by talking to youth in different social contexts, for example in schools, universities, youth centres and clubs, or on the street. The appraisal of the current situation must also include a critical analysis of existing policies and programmes affecting youth. An evaluation should examine whether these are adequate and effective, or if they require adjustment.

5. Formulation of a draft youth policy or action plan

A core group comprising professionals and youth representatives prepares the first draft. This should include the objectives and main activities, the responsibilities, the resources of different partners, and an activity plan and time schedule.

6. Discussion of the draft policy and action plan

The draft youth policy and action plan needs to be presented to a broader youth public and to the actors identified in step 1. Their comments and suggestions should be incorporated into the draft, after which the general agreement of the larger public and the other actors must be obtained. The agreement of the youth may be sought using an assembly of youth representatives.

7. Approval of the youth policy and action plan

On the basis of decision-making processes within the institutions involved and their commitments to the policy and action plan, the responsible authority needs to sign the document and allocate a budget.

8. Dissemination of the policy and action plan

Dissemination is the responsibility of the government and/or respective sector ministries; it may also be carried out by an NGO or a youth group.

9. Implementation of the youth action plan

The stakeholders that participated in the elaboration of the youth action plan and have been qualified within this process are the ones responsible for the implementation. A lead agent or a steering committee coordinates the implementation and monitors its fulfilment as well as the contributions made by the different stakeholders.

10. Monitoring and evaluation, review and adjustment

The implementation and impacts of the youth plans have to be monitored and evaluated, in close cooperation with all the stakeholders involved in its formulation and implementation. This can also be organised by the steering committee. According to the results of this evaluation, the youth action plan must be reviewed and any necessary adjustments made.

Examples

National Youth Action Plan – Chile

Chile's national youth action plan was compiled in 2004. It is considered a crucial element of the democratisation process the country has been undergoing since the end of General Pinochet's dictatorship in 1988. The most important purposes of the plan are the proposal of guidelines for youth issues and the streamlining of relevant governmental action; it proposes capacity building measures for public institutions in youth-related issues and should coordinate the institutions involved in youth promotion in the country. Against this background, the plan has determined the following focal areas:

- Youth citizenship and network generation
- Cultural and leisure activities
- Health
- Youth entrepreneurship and employment
- Access to new technologies.

The plan specifies concrete measures for each of the proposed areas, and names the institution (e.g. ministry) responsible for their implementation, as well as the respective time period for carrying out the measures and the available budget. As most of the institutions mentioned in the plan operate at the national level, the success of the proposed measures clearly depends strongly on available capacities and the inclusion of youth institutions at the regional and local levels.

National Youth Policy – El Salvador

When drawing up the proposal of the national youth policy, the National Secretary of Youth consulted widely and frequently with young people and adults throughout the country, including representatives of various public and private, and national and international institutions. The consultations ensured that they gathered all manner of suggestions that could furnish the proposal with programmatic and operative content. Once designed in preliminary terms, it was presented for consideration and validation to all the key stakeholders. Once again comments, criticism and suggestions were collected to enrich it. After these fundamental inputs had been received and incorporated, the definitive proposal was presented to the president of the republic for approval.

The structure of the youth policy is relatively simple: Chapter I emphasises the background, Chapter II systematises the general and specific basis of the plan. Chapter III then defines the goal, objective and general strategy, while Chapter IV offers a schematic presentation of the pillars and areas of high-priority for strategic operation and effective implementation. Chapter V proposes an institutional system for the operation of the policy, and Chapter VI analyses the necessary human resources, infrastructure and financing. Finally Chapter VII proposes a system of monitoring and evaluation and Chapter VIII presents a proposal for the approval process and implementation of the policy.

The National Youth Policy is being implemented between 2005 and 2015.

National Youth Policy and Action Plan – Kenya

Poverty, social exclusion and a lack of access to education and employment define everyday life for young people in Kenya. With the support of GTZ, the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture & Social Services of Kenya has developed the Kenyan National Youth Policy and the National Youth Action Plan. In these, emphasis is placed on youth participation and empowerment, employment creation, education and training, health, the environment, youth and the media, arts and culture and sports and recreation. The Kenyan National Youth Action Plan was formulated in 2001-2003 and adopted by the Kenyan National Parliament in 2004. It specifies strategies, activities and target groups, as well as a timeframe and the budget lines. All agencies dealing with youth are to be involved in the implementation (government ministries, NGOs, the private sector and various youth organisations). The participation of youth was promoted by conducting a large number of youth hearings at community level. The youth hearings were used as an instrument to analyse the situation as well as the needs and concerns of young people. A draft youth policy and action plan was elaborated, which was discussed by youth organisations at national and local level. The final youth policy and action plan were disseminated to the youth organisations involved.

Relevant literature and websites

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- Youth Employment Network (2007): Joining Forces with Young People: A Practical Guide to Collaboration for Youth Employment.- Geneva
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Websites

Braga Youth Action Plan:

www.un.org/events/youth98/yforum98/bragayap.htm

Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend: www.bmfsfj.de

DIJA - the Database on International Youth Work:

www.dija.de

European Youth Pact:

www.europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11081.htm

Girls Action Plan Europe: www.gap-europe.de

Global Youth Action Network: www.youthlink.org

Infoyouth Network: www.infoyouth.org/

International Youth Foundation: www.iyfn.net

Landesregierung Schleswig-Holstein:

www.schleswig-holstein.de

Lisbon Special European Council:

www.europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10241.htm

Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación of Chile:

www.mideplan.cl

TakingITGlobal: www.takingitglobal.org

UNESCO: www.unesco.org

UNICEF: www.unicef.org

UNICEF, Voices of Youth: www.unicef.org/voy

UN Special Session on Children:

<http://www.unicef.org/specialsession>

Worldbank: www.worldbank.org

World Health Organisation: www.who.int

Youth Coalition: www.youthcoalition.org

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